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Chairman: Mr. Suazo ..... (Honduras)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/57/3 (Parts I and II), A/57/262-E/2002/82 and A/57/354; A/C.2/57/5 and A/C.2/57/6)

1. **Mr. Khan** (Director of the Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination), introducing the report of the Economic and Social Council, drew attention to the important evolution of the role and functioning of the Council. Until recently, it had been one of the most neglected organs of the United Nations, but its tireless activities during the past year reflected many changes in the situation. Meetings had been held throughout the year. In May and June, preparations had been made for the series of high-level meetings and the coordination segment, and during its July meetings the Council had worked intensively and taken decisions on several issues; for instance, it had adopted an important statement which linked the Millennium Declaration with the final documents of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Economic and Social Council had acted in a coordinated and coherent manner. For the first time, it had adopted a decision on strengthening its role and improving its functioning. That was important because in the past it had always been the General Assembly which had decided on the reforms of the Economic and Social Council by adopting an appropriate resolution.

2. Revitalization was not only a subject for debate in the Economic and Social Council; it was already a reality, and the Council had made much more progress than other organs in the United Nations system with regard to the impact of its work and its presentation of fundamental goals and statements of principle which were fully accepted both by the organizations in the United Nations system and by Governments. There were, however, still several areas in which it should continue to move forward. The Council should establish a better relationship with its subsidiary organs, strengthen its ties with the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly and enhance its role in various areas which were not directly connected to its work (specifically, it should link development goals more closely to the humanitarian and peace and security dimensions). In the latter area, the Council was acting in a pragmatic way with measures such as the establishment of the first Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau and the observance of the tenth anniversary of Mozambique. It had undoubtedly been one of the most dynamic years for the Economic and Social Council, but the Council still had to continue improving its functioning.

3. **Mr. Bertucci** (Director of the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration) said that the Millennium Declaration had given expression to the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, respect for nature and protection of the vulnerable sectors of society, had established goals such as poverty eradication, the control of diseases, and environmental protection, and had expressed agreement that good public administration was needed in order to achieve those goals. The performance of States depended on the specialized practical knowledge and the mentality of its employees, since it was they who provided the services, were the source of innovations and implemented the reforms. There was no doubt that one of the fundamental requirements for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration was that States should encourage the participation of their citizens in the formulation of policies and should promote integrity, transparency and accountability in the management of public resources.

4. Institutional, administrative and management deficiencies in public affairs undoubtedly had a negative effect on economic and social development. One area of institutional capacity which must be strengthened in order to achieve the Millennium goals was above all institution building, in other words, the creation of institutions which encouraged the participation of citizens in the formulation of decisions that affected them and which were genuinely in a position to provide social services. The strengthening of human resources was also important, since institutions were administered by people. If the people concerned had the necessary practical and specialized knowledge and mentality, the institutions would function properly. It was important therefore to ensure the constant development and improvement of human resources in the public sector. Another fundamental aspect was financial capacity — not only the availability of resources but also the capacity to administer and mobilize those resources efficiently, to account for them with transparency and to optimize their utilization. Lastly, it was important not to forget the acquisition of knowledge, for example, the capacity of the public sector to acquire and utilize information technologies to provide better services to citizens and

to facilitate their access to the benefits of such technology.

5. Among the functions which the United Nations could perform in order to contribute to the improvement of public management, mention should be made of the preparation of instruments which would enable governments to carry out the necessary reforms and acquire the necessary knowledge to adapt the institutions in the public sector to constantly evolving conditions. The United Nations could also help to shape an understanding on ways of resolving questions and problems and stimulate an exchange of experience.

6. Governments would like to know how other governments were resolving common problems. The United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN), which was the world gateway for the exchange of information on the subject, could perform an extremely useful function for Member States.

7. Lastly, he drew attention to the proposal that 23 June should be established as Public Administration Day, to coincide with the date on which the African countries had been observing that Day since 1994.

8. **Ms. Black** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, emphasized the commitment and responsibility of the Economic and Social Council with regard to the development goals of the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In order to fulfil its commitments, the Council should be in a position to contribute effectively to development. At the same time, in order to avoid duplication, it was essential to give serious consideration to the role which the Council played in the process of strengthening the United Nations.

9. A fundamental aspect of the work of the Council was financing for development. In that connection, the Group of 77 and China welcomed the criteria for the formulation of global policies with regard to financing for development, in particular for the new dynamism that could be observed in the public and private sectors which were participating in the process.

10. Although economic and trade aspects were fundamental to the progress of countries, it should be remembered that human beings were the agents and the goal of any development process; efforts should be redoubled in the social and human rights areas in order to achieve a social development which included the promotion of and respect for human rights, crime prevention, criminal justice and the fight against corruption, religious intolerance, and torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

11. The Group of 77 and China recognized that now more than ever poverty eradication and sustainable development were the main ethical challenges of the current era and it appealed to the international community to fulfil the commitments undertaken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held recently in Johannesburg. In the context of the strengthening of the Council and the search for appropriate and innovative formulas to ensure its relevance and the discharge of its mandate, he welcomed the adoption of the resolution establishing the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict and the establishment, at the resumed session, of a Group to consider the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

12. The Group of 77 and China would submit a draft resolution reiterating the central role of public administration in the achievement of the key goals of the Millennium Declaration; it hoped that it would have full support and be adopted by consensus.

13. She expressed sincere appreciation for the offer of the Kingdom of Morocco to host the next Global Forum, which would be held in Marrakesh in December 2002.

14. **Mr. Sung** (China) fully supported the initiatives set out in the Ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its latest substantive session, which called on the international community to increase significantly their investments in health and education, in a concerted effort to face the challenges of globalization. He also welcomed the measures adopted by the Council to respond promptly to the Monterrey Consensus and its efforts to maintain the impetus generated by the International Conference on Financing for Development and to promote greater collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. His delegation commended the Council on its recent decision to establish, for Guinea-Bissau, the first Ad Hoc Advisory Group on African Countries Emerging from Conflict and expressed the hope that the Group would formulate practical and viable recommendations for the reconstruction and development of Guinea-Bissau.

15. In his delegation's view, the Council should continue to play an important role in international cooperation for development. In the selection and consideration of topics, more emphasis should be placed on the real concerns of the developing countries. If the Council was to be able to discharge its mandate and carry out the functions assigned to it effectively, the international community, in particular the developed countries, should adopt measures designed to guarantee that operational and humanitarian assistance activities received sufficient funds in a timely and foreseeable manner. The Council should also continue to improve its methods of work and its efficiency and to ensure the effective implementation of its resolutions and decisions.

16. As the principal organ of coordination of the whole United Nations system in the economic, social and development spheres, the Council should continue to perform an active function in the promotion of integrated and coordinated activities to follow up the results of major conferences and summit meetings of the United Nations in those spheres, and to improve the statutory functions of supervision, management and guidance which it exercised over the functional commissions, funds and subsidiary programmes. In keeping with the provisions of the Charter and the mandates of the principal organs of the United Nations, the Council should intensify exchanges and collaboration with other organs, in a concerted effort to achieve the Millennium development goals.

17. **Ms. Zubcevic** (Croatia) said that it was only the second year that the Economic and Social Council had submitted a report to the General Assembly and its Committees. The report would no doubt help to promote coordination and collaboration between those two principal organs of the United Nations which considered intersectoral questions such as sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, human rights and gender mainstreaming. In that connection, it was important to maintain a constructive dialogue on ways of giving practical guidance to the international community in follow-up activities to the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit with a view to achieving the desired goals.

18. It would only be possible to maintain the impetus and the spirit of those conferences and demonstrate to the developed and developing countries that the United Nations was seriously engaged in a multilateral programme of sustainable development if those concerned acted in a constructive manner within the United Nations system. Thus the importance of the Council's contributions to the debates in the General Assembly on economic and social matters.

19. She pointed out that her country held the Presidency of the Council for the current year. Among the priorities established for its work, mention should be made of the following: to improve cooperation with the General Assembly and the Security Council; to improve relations with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization; to expand the function of the Council in the promotion of peace and conflict prevention; and to organize its work in such a way that the Council would remain active throughout the year. All those activities would contribute to the strengthening of the Council and would help to ensure that the General Assembly could make good use of the specialized knowledge of the subsidiary organs of the Council and its organizations, funds and programmes.

20. The Council and the Second Committee should intensify their cooperation on economic and social matters with regard to topics which were important to both organs, with a view to providing the Assembly with an integral approach and guidance on the major problems in those spheres.

21. In the implementation of the development goals, the developing countries and those with economies in transition should assume their share of responsibility. It was increasingly recognized that many of the problems afflicting those countries were the result of the insufficient capacity of the State, the weakness of its democratic political institutions and poor management of public administration. In that connection, she commended the report of the Secretary-General on public administration, which contained very relevant proposals and recommendations. At its high-level sessions in 2002, the Council had considered the contribution which increased capacity could make to development, especially in the areas of health and education. Her delegation considered that that was a key question with regard to the improvement of public administration in all spheres. The United Nations should continue to carry out activities in that area in order to help the developing countries and those with economies in transition to achieve the Millennium development goals.

22. Her Government was aware of the importance of having an effective public administration and had incorporated the reform of the public administration into its national development strategy. To that end, it proposed to avoid the creation of new administrative institutions and instead to promote a process of horizontal decentralization under which various governmental activities would be transferred to autonomous organizations such as trade unions, employers' associations, universities and neighbourhood associations. Efforts would be made to avoid the duplication of activities and functions and a savings and cost reduction programme would be introduced. When hiring public officials, emphasis would be placed on competence, and the pay and promotion system would be modified in order to stimulate efficient work, innovation, creativity and dedication. The salaries of high-level public officials would be brought into line with those of experts at an equivalent level outside the public administration in order to attract qualified personnel. A programme to introduce information and communication technologies in the public administration had been initiated with a view to improving efficiency in the exchange of information and the management of knowledge. Autonomous, local and regional governments would also be strengthened and their capacity to carry out many more activities would be improved.

23. Lastly, it was important to emphasize that the development goals would be achieved within the established deadlines only by combining efforts, promoting confidence within and outside the United Nations system, and increasing cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization, the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organizations.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.